



# COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA JOINT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

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## **Position Paper 2022-06** **Virginia National Guard State Park Admission**

**OBJECTIVE:** To ensure Virginia's continued commitment to the men and women of the Virginia National Guard by offering free or reduced price entrance to state parks for all Virginia National Guard members.

### **BACKGROUND:**

- Federal parks offer free admission for all National Guard members.
- Numerous states offer free admission to state parks for their National Guard members. Some states extend this to Guard members from out of state for example:
  - Thousands of Virginia Soldiers will mobilize through installations in Texas in 2021 and 2022.
  - They are able to visit all of the State parks in Texas without paying an entrance fee.
  - Those same Soldiers have to pay a fee to use a state park in Virginia.
- This year alone approximately 1,500 members of the Virginia National Guard were mobilized in response to COVID-19 and civil disturbance response throughout the Commonwealth.
- As of June 30, 2021, there were 8,671 members for the Virginia Army National Guard (7,152 Soldiers) and the Virginia Air National Guard (1,519 Airmen).

### **DISCUSSION:**

- Offering free or reduced state park admission for members of the Virginia National Guard recognizes their continued service to the Commonwealth during times of need.
- There will be a cost to the state (i.e. foregone revenue for the state park system) of providing this recognition, but the costs should be relatively low.

**RECOMMENDATION:** That the Governor and General Assembly grant free or reduced price admission to Virginia State parks to members of the Virginia National Guard.